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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : Amembassy HELSINKI

101

DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

August 28, 1961

DATE

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SUBJECT: Agrarian Leader Acknowledges Soviets Influence Finnish Domestic Affairs

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SUMMARY

As the presidential election campaign began to warm up near the end of August, Johannes VIROLAINEN, a leading Agrarian politician, in defending his party's refusal to enter a government with the Social Democrats, came close to stating outright that the Soviet attitude is determining as regards the composition of the Finnish Government.

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Virolainen's Speech

Agrarian Party Vice-Chairman and Agriculture Minister Johannes Virolainen spoke on August 22 in response to charges by supporters of presidential candidate Olavi HONKA that the Agrarian Party, desiring to gather all political power to itself, is opposed to majority coalition government. (Enclosure 1). Addressing a meeting of the local organization of Agrarians in Kiuruvesi, Virolainen was at pains to demonstrate that his party has diligently and repeatedly sought formation of a majority cabinet. All these efforts had failed, he said, "because of those groups which even now do not acknowledge certain political realities".

The "most central" of these realities, Virolainen said, is the necessity of recognizing the effect of the cabinet's composition on Finland's foreign relations. Coming directly to the root of the Opposition's argument Agrarian refusal to serve in a cabinet with the Social Democrats—he said his party has not coalesced with the Socialists in a cabinet because such a cabinet would "almost certainly end up in a foreign policy crisis" like that which befell the Fagerholm Government of 1958. (The Fagerholm Government was made up of 5 non-Communist parties, the most important being the Agrarian

Cleared in draft with B. Gufler

HF Nelson Jr:blr 8/28/61

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and Social Democratic Parties. That short-lived cabinet was brought down under pressure from the Soviets who clearly indicated distaste for certain of its Socialist members.) "Is not one failure enough?", Virolainen asked. Then, addressing Honka directly, he requested the candidate to state whether or not it is wrong to take "foreign policy realities" into account when attempting to resolve the cabinet question.

MAAKANSA, a new paper faithfully reflecting the views of those in control of the Agrarian Party, repeated and applauded Virolainen's arguments on August 24. "If", concluded the paper, "Mr. Honka deigns to answer whether in his opinion the President of the Republic and the Agrarian Party have acted incorrectly by taking foreign policy realities as their lodestar in the government question, we will be able to say what sort of outlook and basis Mr. Honka has regarding foreign policy."

Political Columnist Asks: What is the Limit?

Virolainen's speech has stimulated limited public comment thus far, perhaps because the waning summer holiday season is still being savored by the Finns.

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cogent reply to Virolainen was provided, however, by Esko SAARINEN, political editor for independent HELSINGIN SANOMAT, who wrote on August 24: "... it would be interesting to know how far, in his (Virolainen's) opinion, one should go in taking foreign policy realities into account." If, asked Saarinen, the present Agrarian Cabinet got into foreign policy difficulties, "should it resign as Virolainen and his party colleagues did at the time of the third Fagerholm Government or should it try to manage matters in spite of everything and hope for better times?" Virolainen, Saarinen said, suggests that the Soviet Union still looks upon Finland with distrust even though Finno-Soviet relations are based on "treaties often described as perfect". "This is an unfortunate thing and demonstrates that, despite all its efforts, our foreign policy leadership has not convinced the Soviet Union of our sincere desire to live peaceably and maintain good neighborly relations."

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For the Ambassador:

Harvey F. Nelson, Jr.

Harvey F. Nelson, Jr.
Second Secretary of Embassy

Enclosure: 1 att.

1. Excerpts from Virolainen's
Kiuruvesi Speech.

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EXCERPTS FROM JOHANNES VIROLAINEN'S SPEECH TO KIURUVESI AGRARIAN MEETING

(August 20, 1961)

"The Agrarian Party cannot be charged with lack of willingness to co-operate (with other parties) and with striving for one-party rule. We agree with presidential candidate Honka that the Government should represent as large a segment of the population as possible. We also agree with him that the power position of one party in the society easily leads to superciliousness in relations with other groups and even to misuse of power. In Finland no party has had a possibility to get into power alone, and it is to be hoped that no party will get it in the future either. In Finland the realization of democracy requires a conscious effort to achieve conciliatory collaboration between various parties. During the present election term such an effort has animated the activity of the Agrarian Party.

"After the elections (July 1958), a broad-based cabinet was formed in August 1958. The Cabinet had all the prerequisites regarding domestic policy to operate successfully. But the Cabinet failed in foreign policy, falling for this reason and only for this reason.

"The Agrarian Party has striven in many ways to broaden the cabinet basis within the framework of preconditions which are, in our opinion, realistic. All efforts have failed, and not because of the Agrarian Party, but because of those groups which even now do not acknowledge certain central realities. The most central of these realities is this: Shall we, when we resolve the cabinet question, keep in mind in advance the foreign-political effects of the solution or not? In the opinion of the Agrarian Party, they should be considered in advance. This is why we have not entered a cabinet similar to that of August 1958; it is obvious that its fate would be exactly the same as that of Fagerholm's Cabinet in the fall 1958. Is not one failure enough?

Since we have not entered a coalition cabinet with the Social Democrats, we have been constantly criticized. It has been unfairly stated that the basis of the Agrarian attitude has been greediness for power, that we want to discriminate against the Social Democrats, that we have given up parliamentarism, etc. Certain newspapers write constantly with insinuations that the Agrarian Party is no longer a democratic party. All charges like this are intended to evade the main point, which, as we have stated above, continues to be the attitude toward foreign-policy realities. If unanimity can be reached on this point, a parliamentary majority cabinet can be formed very quickly, and the dispute on domestic policy can be brought to an end. This is the firm opinion of the Agrarian Party.

"In his speech to the Social Democrats in Tampere last Sunday, presidential candidate Olavi Honka charged the Agrarian Party in the same way that has recently been characteristic of the newspapers of the groups which have set themselves behind him. Since the basic reason for the crisis was forgotten when these charges were made, we may be allowed to present certain questions to Olavi Honka: In your opinion, when the cabinet question is being resolved,

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should foreign-policy realities be kept in mind in advance or not? Has the Agrarian Party done the wrong thing by heeding the realities and by not entering a coalition cabinet with the Social Democrats after the Fagerholm Cabinet fell because of foreign-policy difficulties? We Agrarians would be grateful if we could get straight answers to these straight questions. Along with us, the whole Finnish nation expects from you an answer that would show how this problem should be resolved in your opinion in order to bring the shattered condition of domestic politics to an end.

"In the opinion of the Agrarian Party this problem can in the best way be solved under the present President's leadership. When all parties in practice pay heed to foreign-policy realities, acting accordingly, we will be able to eliminate the doubts which still appear beyond the borders of our country regarding our aims. The present President of the Republic has gained a good name both in the West and the East. This is a fact which nobody can deny. It is also a thing that is very valuable for the whole country.

"It is wrong to blame the President for the fragmentation in domestic politics, as is shown by what I have said. If one wants to charge the President, he can be charged only for the fact that, in his opinion, it would not be advantageous for Finland's interests to repeat the action of August 1958. We Agrarians are convinced that as soon as the foreign-policy preconditions exist, the President will do all he can for the establishment of a majority cabinet in the country. We know the attitude of the present President towards this central question. It is necessary to know what is Olavi Honka's attitude.

"The question I have touched on is more important than all the other problems connected with the presidential elections and the solution of the cabinet question. This is why it has to be solved first. Until now the supporters of Honka have paid no attention to this question. This is the thing which will also connect the cabinet question to the presidential question after the President has been elected. Then we will also have to confront it, because the foreign policy situation will not have changed at all by February or March, at least not in a better direction. Because of this we cannot cross or by-pass this problem, this political threshold. It has to be resolved first. Therefore, we repeat our question to presidential candidate Olavi Honka: Has the Agrarian Party done the wrong thing in taking account of foreign-policy realities and in refusing to enter a cabinet which one knows in advance will almost certainly end up in a foreign-policy crisis in a repetition of the events of the fall of 1958? We are so persistent with our questions because we Agrarians ardently hope that a better understanding and collaboration between various groups can be achieved in this country, that the arguing of questions of secondary value will cease, and that the use of cheap devices in the political struggle will be brought to an end. After you have replied to these questions, Mr. Presidential Candidate, the atmosphere will certainly become cleansed and people will see what the Presidential elections are all about. So we await your answer."

Translation by JSipila.

8/24/61

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